

SURVEY OF CURRENT EVENTS

BRITAIN'S "SUPER-DREAD-NOUGHTS OF THE LAND."

The famous "cheesebox on a raft" that revolutionized naval warfare may have its land counterpart, editorial observers are noting, in the new British traveling forts, or land-monitors, nicknamed "tanks" and "Willies" by the "Tommies." These novel engines of war made their dramatic first appearance on September 15th on the Somme front, when, advancing calmly across trenches and shell-craters, through wire entanglements and stone walls, they led the infantry in an attack which pierced the German third line of defense and administered what General Haig characterizes as "probably the most effective blow that has yet been dealt the enemy by the British troops." Although only casually mentioned in the official bulletin of that day's fighting as "a new type of heavy-armed car which proved to be of considerable utility," in the unofficial reports they come in for a wealth of allusion that is almost as vague as it is picturesque. Thus these new juggernauts, which, as one editor remarks, "have all the earmarks of having burst full into the fray out of the pages of Mr. H. G. Wells or Mr. Jules Verne," are variously described as land-dreadnoughts and mobile fortresses, and are compared to "steel tortoises," "prehistoric monsters," and "loads of vast size." "They knock down trees like match-sticks," we are told; "they go clean through a wood; they cut up houses and walk right over them; they stamp down dugouts like wasps' nests, and climb the barricades like elephants." Their gait is generally described as a waddle, but in some accounts they crawl, walk and "lollop." According to German reports, the "cruelty" of these monsters "is equaled by their efficiency." They crushed, General Haig reports, "indescribable demoralization in the enemy's ranks." The British soldiers, one correspondent tells us, charged beside the new fighting-machines "in the greatest good humor, laughing as they ran."

"In one short hour," says a correspondent of the London Times, "the 'tanks' did more military service, killed more of the enemy, and had a greater influence on the war than all the Zeppelins." And he predicts that before the war is over both sides will be building "other monsters, each huger and each more horrible than the last, until there will be battles of whole fleets of land-dreadnoughts and terrestrial monitors."

"When the secrecy which rightly surrounds the construction and use of this most recent addition to our fighting-machines can be lifted," remarks the same London paper, "we may perhaps be enabled to imagine the feelings of the German infantry in shell-battered trenches when, in the uncertain light of dawn, they saw advancing upon them an array of unearthly monsters, cased in steel and spitting fire." And a dispatch from the Somme front declares that "there has been nothing more wonderful in the war than the spectacle of this advance." Said a captured German officer to an Associated Press correspondent:

"There was no standing against that sort of thing. Of course we surrendered—those of us who were alive. We fired at a tank with our rifles. Our machine guns turned loose on it. But the bullets were only blue sparks on the armor. We thought the British slow and stupid, despite their courage and stubbornness, and they gave us a surprise like this!"

At some points in the attack of September 15th, we are told, British aeroplanes co-operated with the infantry and the tanks by flying low and firing into the German trenches. "The scene," says the London Evening Star, "when the huge steel monsters charged the barbed wire and vast birds flew along the German trenches, must have recalled the terrors of prehistoric man when dinosaurs and pterodactyls assailed his primitive cave-dwelling." Yet so grotesque, it seems, is the appearance of these mechanical Molochs of the battlefield that, despite their terrible effectiveness, they "tickled the risibilities of all ranks," and even many German prisoners "began laughing when recalling the first glimpse of them." "It was like a fairy-tale," said a cockney boy wounded as he charged beside one of these cars; "I can't help laughing every time I think of it." According to a London dispatch to the New York Tribune they are an adaptation of the caterpillar tractor so familiar on our Western prairies. Says the London Daily Mail:

"These long, low, dust-covered tortoises have no resemblance to motor-cars. They are, in fact, steel land-ships of immense power and wonderful capacity. In practice they can climb walls, push through dense woods, cross trenches, and maneuver in and out of craters. One of the most remarkable facts about them is the secrecy with which the making of their thousands of parts was veiled in the Midland town of their birth. The army likes them, but it is not placing too much reliance on what is for the present only an experiment."

"One of the monsters charged a house. There was a whirl of shells, a grinding crash, and all that was left of the structure was a few splintered parts."

And from the London Evening Standard we learn further that—

"England's latest weapon of war is nothing more nor less than a huge landship, fully armored and capable of traveling at fair speed over the shell-battered and cratered terrain of Picardy. Designed, as they are, to traverse the most difficult country and to sweep away all obstacles in their path, they naturally are of fairly large size, with caterpillar wheels constructed to cover the widest trench or shell-hole and to enable the vehicle to tackle almost any depth of mire. Their crews are protected by varying numbers of armored plates, any one of which is impervious to machine-gun or rifle-fire as well as shrapnel-bullets, and it is asserted that only a direct hit from a gun of large caliber could put one of these monsters out of commission."

"While from a defensive point of view they are almost perfect, their offensive qualities are even superior, and when they have cleared a trench of the enemy or have forced the survivors into the shelter of their dugouts, these land-ships—'tanks,' as the Tommies prefer to call them—have another little surprise in store for the beaten enemy, about which perhaps it were wise not to say more."

"Most of the great engineering works in England can claim a share in the production of these armored cars. They are built in parts at different factories in order to preserve the secret of their construction, and they are then assembled at a central factory under the supervision of experts of the armored-car division."

Some of the exploits of this new engine in the advance which the soldiers have nicknamed "the tank offensive"

are narrated by a writer in the London Daily News:

"One whose steering-gear got out of order couldn't turn to the right or left, so it trundled straight ahead until quite out of touch with the infantry, then sat down on a German trench, and for five hours withstood bomb attacks."

"In another case the land-ship found the infantry was not coming on behind, so it went back to find out what was the matter. They were held up by a trench which the tank had overlooked, where a strong bomb party of Germans were situated. So the machine walked over to the trench, deposited itself on top of it and wiped the bomb party out."

"One tank is known to have put out of action six German machine guns in a single position. Another wandered around for hours, nosing out German machine-gun positions in shell-holes about the open, and dealing with them firmly when found."

"Another, after rendering yeoman service in the operations in High Wood, went on to what it thought was our front trench and then discovered it was a German one. It came back shortly afterward with twenty-five German prisoners, who walked beside it like a flock of sheep, cowed by its machine guns."

"Another cleaned out a German machine-gun post in a shell-hole, and then one of the gunners of the crew got out and took charge of a German gun and stayed there to use it against its former owners."

"They have proved themselves real and formidable engines of war, and a new service has been created: his Majesty's land navy."

Philip Gibbs, in a dispatch to the New York Times, tells how one of these tanks, bearing the incongruous name of "Creme de Menthe," captured the fortified ruins of a sugar-factory southeast of Courcellette:

"It advanced upon a broken wall, leaned up against it heavily until it fell with a crash of bricks, and then rose on to the bricks and passed over them and walked straight into the midst of the factory ruins. From its sides came flashes of fire and a host of bullets, and then it trampled around over the machine-gun emplacement, 'having a grand time,' as one of the men said with enthusiasm. It crushed the machine guns under its heavy ribs and killed the machine-gun teams with its deadly fire. The infantry followed in and took the place after this good help, and then advanced again around the flanks of the monster."—Literary Digest.

VON BETHMANN-HOLLWEG'S OPINION OF ENGLAND.

In an extended speech on the occasion of the opening of the Reichstag, Chancellor von Bethmann-Hollweg reviewed the military situation confronting Germany, and referred to England as "our most egotistical, our most bitter and our most tenacious enemy" according to the semi-official report of the Overseas News Agency this afternoon.

"A German statesman who would refrain from using against this enemy every proper means of warfare which is apt to shorten the war deserves to be hanged," is one of the statements attributed to the chancellor.

The chancellor began by reviewing at length the entry of Roumania into the war, and said that the Russian offensive this spring had made Premier Bratiano believe he saw the breaking down of the central powers.

"Accordingly," the speaker said, "he

decided to obtain a share when the robbery of the dead body began.

"Since the beginning of the world war Roumania has followed a policy of piracy, depending upon the general war situation. Roumania's military capitulation will prove as mistaken as her political capitulation to her entente friends, which already has been proved to have been wrong. They must have hoped earnestly that Roumania's participation in the war would cause the defection of Bulgaria and Turkey, but Turkey and Bulgaria are not the same as Roumania and Italy. Firm and inviolable stands their faithfulness as allies, and they have won glorious victories in Dobrudja."

Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg then reviewed the military situation. "Since the beginning of July," he said, "English and French attacks on the Somme have raged almost without interruption. The common offensive of the entente enemies wanted to break through the front of the hated Germans, free France and Belgium and carry the war across the Rhine into Germany."

"But what has happened? The French and English have gained advantages and have pushed back our first lines some kilometers. We deplore the heavy losses in men and material. This, however, is unavoidable in the face of an offensive planned on such a broad scale. But what our enemies hoped and attempted did not succeed. Our front was not broken nor rolled up, but stands firm and unshaken. Heavy and violent is the fighting there on the Somme, and the end is not yet in view. Further sacrifices are necessary. This or that trench and this or that village may be lost. But they will not push through our lines."

"On the eastern front, the great Russian attempt to break through was stopped by the troops of Archduke Charles and General von Linsingen. Attacks west of Lutsk, on the Narayuvka River, and in the Carpathians then followed, but they also broke down."

"There also the fighting will continue. There also it is absolutely certain that the line will be maintained by the heroism of our armies."

"In the Balkans the entente powers planned to split our alliance, then interrupt communication between Germany and the near East, to crush Bulgaria, Turkey and Austria-Hungary, one after the other, and then throw all their forces against isolated Germany."

Fails to Mention Belgium in Speech.

The address of the German Imperial Chancellor, Dr. von Bethmann-Hollweg in the Reichstag is more remarkable for what it omitted than for what it said, according to Lord Robert Cecil, Minister of War Trade, who, in discussing the speech with the Associated Press to-day declared the most significant fact in connection with the chancellor's utterance was his failure to mention Belgium. Lord Robert said:

"There is a very definite change in the tone of the speech over the previous efforts of the chancellor. The talk of a complete German victory is entirely absent. Another remarkable thing was that there was not a word about Belgium. The significance of this is probably that he was unable to say anything about Belgium, as his listeners can be assumed to be the whole world, and he was bound to offend a section of it if Belgium was mentioned. If he attempted to justify German occupation he would offend the best of all neutral opinion, and he equally would offend his own people if he expressed an opinion to give up that country."

Be of good courage when you pray for others. Intercession has great influence with God.—Spurgeon.